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CHINA BOMB STIRS FEARS OF PASTORE

Peking Expected To Be 'Formidable Power' In Five Years

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[Washington Bureau of The Sun]

Washington, July 13—Senator Pastore (D., R.I.), chairman of the Joint Atomic Energy Committee, said today he thought Communist China would be a "formidable nuclear power" in five years.

Pastore made the statement at a brief press conference following a closed session of the committee, which heard testimony about the nuclear capabilities of China. The Peking Government exploded its first hydrogen bomb June 17.

Witnesses from the Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Department appeared before the joint committee this morning in a meeting which lasted two hours.

"Quite Frightening"

Pastore said afterward that "China has made very, very spectacular progress" in the nuclear field, adding: "To me, it is quite frightening."

He was asked if the Chinese in perhaps five years, would, become capable of delivering nuclear weapons over intercontinental distances.

The Rhode Island Democrat replied: "China, in five years, will be a formidable nuclear power."

Defense Department officials said today the June 17 test had not changed Pentagon estimates that China would be unable to deploy a significant number of intercontinental ballistic missiles before the mid-seventies.

Hosmer Prediction

Representative Hosmer (R., Cal.), ranking Republican on the joint committee said he thought the Chinese would be able to "marry" a nuclear warhead to an ICBM in about three years.

Hosmer emphasized, however, that putting together one such weapon was quite different from having a large number of nuclear-tipped rockets in place and ready to fire.

None of these estimates seemed necessarily contradictory, possibly because all of them may be based on the same general information from American intelligence sources.

Different judgments can emerge, nevertheless, from the same intelligence data.

"Spectacular Indication"

Representative Holifield (D., Cal.), vice chairman of the joint committee, did not appear to be awed by what he had heard at the closed meeting in the Capitol.

But he did say that in his opinion the fact that the Chinese have set off six nuclear explosions in three years was a "spectacular indication of their ability to make atom-hydrogen weapons."

China carried out its first atomic test October 16, 1964. It was a relatively small blast, reported to be about 20 kilotons, or the equivalent of 20,000 tons of T.N.T. in explosive power.

Last month's hydrogen test was estimated at between 2 and 7 megatons. A megaton is the equivalent of 1,000,000 tons of T.N.T.

Matter Of Judgment

Holifield said a forecast of when China would be able to employ nuclear weapons under combat conditions was a matter of judgment. He also said "We don't have a great deal of information" about the missile capabilities of the Chinese.

In any event, he said the problems to be solved in making nuclear weapons are far more complex than those encountered in the developing missiles.

"The construction of a hydrogen bomb offers more technological problems than a missile," he said.

In reply to a question about the possible need for an anti-ballistic missile system as a consequence of the Chinese hydrogen test, Holifield said, "I certainly think it adds strength to the proponents" of such a system.

High Degree Of Protection

Robert S. McNamara, Secretary of Defense, has said that a limited ABM system "might offer a high degree of protection against a missile attack" from China, "at least through the 1970's."

McNamara further stated in his annual military appraisal for the Senate in January that the total investment in such an "austere ABM defense" might amount to $3,500,000,000. The cost of a far more elaborate system to protect the United States from a Soviet nuclear attack would cost about $40,000,000,000 over a ten-year period, McNamara said.

The Johnson Administration has been reluctant to invest in the system, partly for economic reasons and partly to avoid another round of arms competition with the Soviet Union. In addition, a perfect ABM system has yet to be devised.